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*Deceptive
Beginnings*

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KAY

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DECEPTIVE BEGINNINGS

From a glimpse to a brief encounter, Angel thought there was hope. The chemistry between Zach and her was undeniable. While she juggled school and work in the daytime, he consumed her nights. She thought she'd achieved an enviable life. However, Zach had other intentions. His deception throws Angel's life into chaos.

CHAPTER 1

Twenty-four hours had passed since she saw him across the courtyard. Tall, dark, and handsome he stood without a care in the world. Feeling she's out of his league, Angel couldn't help but desire him. She turned away for a moment and glanced back to see if he was still there. However, he wasn't.

While Angel walked to her apartment, she thought about him. She wondered if she'd ever see him again.

Angel opened her door and went inside. She dropped her bag on the couch.

It was five o'clock. Angel hadn't eaten since noon. She went over to the refrigerator and pulled out a salad. Then, she sat at the table and ate.

Her cell phone vibrated. It was Kate.

"What are you doing?"

"Eating."

"Do you want to go out later?"

"Where?"

"To the club."

"Remember, I have a paper to write."

"I thought you finished it."

"No."

"Okay. I guess we'll go another night."

"Sorry."

"No problem."

Angel was a junior in college and majored in Creative Writing. She worked at Stanger Publishing on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

She walked into the coffee shop. "I'll have a White Chocolate Cappuccino."

The cashier handed it to her.

"Hey there."

She turned around. It was him.

"Hey."

"Are you in a rush?"

"I have class in twenty minutes."

"I'm Zach. Do you mind if I walk with you?"

"Um."

"I promise I'm not a stalker."

"Okay. I'm Angel."

"Nice to meet you."

They walked out the coffee shop.

He turned to her. "I've seen you around and wanted to meet you."

"You have?"

"Yes. But, you already know that."

"What do you mean?"

"Yesterday."

"I thought I saw you. But when I looked again, you were gone."

"Yes. I had to go to work. I'm here now."

"Yes, you are. I hate to cut this short, but this is my class."

"Let me have your phone."

"Why?"

"My digits."

"What makes you think I want them?"

"You want them. I can tell."

He typed in his number. "Give me a call."

"Sure." She left him at the door and went into class.

Zach spent most of his time as a freelance photographer. He had a passion for beautiful women. Angel fit his type. Blonde and petite.

He wandered onto the campus and hoped to catch a glimpse of her. He took a seat in the café and nursed a cup of coffee. Fifteen minutes later, he overheard a conversation.

"I don't know. He's a great professor, but sometimes..."

Zach recognized the voice and turned around.

"Hi there."

Angel's eyes widened. "Um, hi." She turned to her classmate. "We'll catch up later. Okay?" She sat down at the table with Zach.

"I've waited for your call."

"I'm sorry. I've been busy with work and school. Do you attend here?"

"No, I have a buddy, who does."

"Oh, okay."

"So, I must not have made a good impression on you."

"Why would you say that?"

"No call. But, I understand you have better things to do."

"No. It's not that."

"Okay, if you say so. How about we go out on Friday night?"

Even though she thought he was handsome, seeing him at the café made her uneasy. Especially after he said, he wasn't a student at the college.

"I don't know. I'll have to check my schedule."

"Okay. So, will you call me to let me know?"

"Sure. Well, it's nice seeing you again. I'll let you know about Friday."

“I’ll be waiting.”

Angel walked out the café and hurried home.

Seeing Zach at the café weighed on Angel’s mind. Was she paranoid? Maybe, it was a coincidence. However, she’s seen him three times in less than a week. Nevertheless, he’s a looker. What would be the harm of one date with him?

Angel dialed his number.

“So, you decided to call.”

“Yep.”

“Are we on for Friday night?”

“Sure. Where?”

“I think Cecile’s for dinner and Club Oscars.”

“What time?”

“Seven o’clock.”

“Do I get your address and phone number?”

“I’ll give you my phone number and meet you at Cecile’s.”

“Thanks. No complaints.”

She thought she’d better be safe with her personal information. Meeting him in a public place was appropriate for now.

Angel stepped into the black dress and zipped it. She thought modest cleavage was in order. The dress was short but not butt-cheek short.

She took a final check in the mirror, grabbed her purse, and left her apartment.

When she arrived at Cecile’s, Zach was at the table. He stood up and pulled her chair out.

“Thanks.” She thought about the last time a guy pulled out a chair for her. Never. Zach scored a ten in good manners.

“You look awesome tonight.”

“Why thank you. You look great, too.”

“Thanks. Do you like shrimp?”

“Yes.”

“Their Shrimp Scampi is delightful. Would you like to try it?”

“Sure.”

He ordered for them. “So, tell me more about you.”

“Well, as you know I attend Keaton. I’m a Creative Writing major. I work part-time at a publishing company. What about you?”

“I’m a freelance photographer. Other than that, I’m a boring guy.”

“You don’t look boring. I’m sure you have all the ladies.”

“No, I don’t. Besides, I have eyes just for you.”

“I bet. You’re a charmer.”

“You make it easy. You’re beautiful.”

Angel blushed. He laid it on thick. But, she liked it.

Zach moved his head to the beat of the music. “You’ve been nursing that drink for a while. Do you want to dance?”

“Sure.”

He took Angel’s hand and led her to the dance floor. The music put their bodies into a rhythmic trance. Every time they got close to each other, Angel thought he was going to kiss her. But, he didn’t.

She watched how Zach’s shirt clung to his six-pack. Her mind wandered to hot sweaty images of him taking her into his arms and caressing her body.

He caught her in a trance. “Are you okay?” Then, he shot a devilish grin.

Angel took a deep breath. “Yes. Maybe, we should have a seat.” She felt embarrassed because she felt he caught her lusting after him.

They walked back to their table and sat down.

“So, you seem to be enjoying yourself tonight.”

“Yes, this was fun. I haven’t been out in a while. You know with work and school.”

“Maybe, we should do this again sometime. That is if you’re up for it.”

“I might pencil you in for another date.”

“Great. Well, it’s late. We better make it out of here before they throw us out.”

“Yes, I agree.”

He helped her up. They walked out the club.

“Well, I’ve had a great time.” Zach scanned her face to see if he’d be able to go home with her.

She paused for thirty seconds. “I did too.”

He took the hesitation as a no. “You have a safe trip home.” He gave her a quick kiss on the lips.

“You, too.” She disappeared into the darkness.

CHAPTER 2

While Angel sat at her desk and reviewed the manuscript, she thought about Zach. They'd been on several dates in the past three months. He'd shown himself to be the perfect gentleman. Never once he'd suggest they sleep together. Even though she thought it was odd, she felt relieved.

Being intimate with him would be a huge step. She knew how easy it was for her to confuse intimacy with love.

Her mind wandered to Paul. Paul was her first college crush, who quickly turned into her lover. He lit a fire inside of her that she had a hard time extinguishing. Their sex was fiery and all-consuming. Angel almost flunked American Literature because of the exorbitant amount of time they spent together.

Her phone vibrated. Zach sent her a text. *Want to meet up tonight?*

Sure. What time?

Seven. At my place.

Your place?

Yes, I want to cook dinner for you.

Wow. Okay. I'll see you at seven.

Angel thought Zach was too good to be true. The only man, who'd cook for her was her father. And that was when she was a child.

Zach made it hard for her to resist not falling in love with him. He kept upping his game.

Zach planned on scoring tonight. He knew this romantic meal would do the trick. Everything had progressed just as he planned it. Angel had fallen for him. Now, he'd reel her in and claim victory.

He heard a knock at the door. It had to be Angel. And, it was. "Welcome." He took her hand and led her into his apartment.

"It smells great in here. I love the place setting. You've outdone yourself."

"Thank you." He pulled the chair out for her. "We'll start things off with a salad."

Angel looked at Zach while she ate. He looked so delicious in his plaid button-down shirt and ripped jeans. Zach was a combination of a lumberjack and a fashion model. "Where did you learn to cook like this? This salmon is delicious."

"I would say my mother taught me, but that'd be a lie. I took cooking classes."

"Impressive. I'm not much of a cook."

“I could teach you. That is if you want to learn.”

“Who knows? Maybe. I think I’ll leave it to you for right now.”

“Okay. How was the Rosé?”

“Great. I’ve enjoyed this wonderful meal.”

“Thanks. Why don’t we watch a movie?”

“Sure.”

“Have a seat on the sofa. I’ll be there in a couple of minutes.”

Zach eased closer to Angel as they watched the movie. She rested her head on his shoulder. Her left hand grabbed his right hand. He drew her hand up to his mouth and kissed it. She turned to him. They stared at each other’s eyes and kissed.

Angel’s heart pounded as the heat in her body rose. She wanted Zach and felt there’s no stopping what was about to happen.

As their tongues see-sawed in each other’s mouths, their clothes fell off piece by piece.

She whispered, “Not here. Let’s go to your bed.”

“Okay.” He took her into his bedroom. They fell onto his bed.

Zach kissed every inch of her body. She moaned with pleasure. Angel accepted his fiery thrusts. Their synced bodies rumbled the silk sheets for twenty minutes.

Angel lay on his chest and stared at the ceiling. She felt the heavens opened and gave her a new life. It felt good to be in someone’s bed again.

He enjoyed having her in his bed and smiled at the thought of his accomplishment. She was his now. Checkmate.

Angel rolled over in bed and noticed she was naked. She looked around the room. Photos of scantily clad women adorned the walls. Zach possessed the typical bachelor bedroom. From the tan silk sheets to the cherry-stained upholstered bed with a chocolate tufted inset, she was in a man’s world.

She wondered how many women he’d bedded down in this California King. Worse yet, were there any bikini panties left behind. Ew. Angel looked around for her clothes and slipped them on.

The smell of onions and bell peppers drew her to the kitchen. Zach was at the stove flipping an omelet.

“So, you decided to wake up. Good morning.”

“Good morning. I must’ve been worn out.”

“After three times of you know what, I’m sure you were.”

“What? Are you serious? I don’t remember that.”

“It must’ve been the four glasses of Rosé.”

“Oh my, I’ll make sure to lay off it. Or, drink in moderation. That’s unlike me.”

“Well, I didn’t mind the exercise. It was quite exhilarating.”

“I’m glad you were satisfied.”

“Sit and eat this tasty omelet.”

Angel sat down and ate. She didn’t remember doing it that many times. However, she trusted he wasn’t lying.

CHAPTER 3

Kate knocked on the door.

“Who is it?”

“Kate.”

Angel opened the door. “Hey. Why didn’t you call or text?”

“Well, you haven’t returned any of my calls or texts. I decided to pop by to see if you were still alive.”

“Sorry. I’ve had a hectic life.”

“I bet.”

“What do you mean?”

“We’ve been besties since elementary school. I know when a man has occupied your time.”

Angel closed the door. They went over to her couch. “I admit you’re correct. I didn’t want to say anything because you know how I am with relationships.”

“Why should I judge you? I don’t have a ring on my finger. We both know how many guys I’ve had.”

Angel laughed. “True. I don’t know. Zach’s got me hooked. I’m embarrassed to say I’m in love with him.”

“He must’ve put it on you to the max.”

“Girl, Zach has skills. It seems my GPA has risen since he’s been loving me down.”

“You don’t say? He sounds mighty impressive. Does he have a brother?”

“Gee, that’s funny. We’ve never talked about family.”

“Okay. So, how did you meet?”

“Well, I saw him in the courtyard. We first met in the coffee shop.”

“How happenstance? What does he do besides you?”

“He’s a photographer.”

“A photographer? Have you two made any nasty flicks?”

“I said a photographer, not a filmmaker. Ha. And no, we don’t make sex flicks.”

“I hope not. I’d hate to see your sweet cheeks on the internet. What would your parents say?”

“You know what they’d say. They’d disown me.”

“Agreed. Well, I’m glad you’re okay. In between your sessions, drop a girl at least some characters in a text to let me know you’re okay.”

“Will do. You’re the best. I’ll do better.”

“You better. Remember besties outlast a man.”

“Girl code intact.”

Kate left. Angel straightened up her living room and went to bed.

Zach watched Angel as she sat on the bench with a guy. He wondered who the guy was. They seemed familiar with each other. Maybe, he was a classmate. At least, that better be the reason they're together.

He snapped pictures of them and watched them walk away from the bench. They disappeared into the building.

Zach went back to his apartment. He uploaded the pictures to his laptop. Then, he saved them under a file named Angel.

This file contained everything he needed to know about his Angel. He did a background check on her. She'd been under surveillance for months.

Angel didn't know he had cloned her phone. Every text message he read. He'd managed to set up cameras in her apartment. Nothing happened in that apartment without his knowledge.

Earlier in their relationship, he feared she knew he'd been watching her, but he managed to explain his way out her concerns.

She belonged to him. He wasn't going to let anyone come between them.

Angel had an incoming text.

I'll be over at six o'clock.

Okay.

Do you want me to bring anything?

No. See you then.

Okay.

He jotted down the number and wondered who this mystery person was. It didn't matter. Zach would be listening and watching.

Zach had his laptop ready for six o'clock. He heard a knock at Angel's door.

Angel opened the door. A guy walked in with a backpack. She addressed him as Robert. It was the guy who was with her earlier.

Zach frowned. However, seeing the backpack eased his mind. He rested his left elbow on the table as he watched them sit on the couch.

Robert pulled out a folder with papers. He handed them to her. She read over them and made corrections.

When she got up to get something to drink, Robert watched her walk to the kitchen and smiled. Zach dared him to touch her. Because if Robert touched her, he'd pay.

Angel handed him a glass; she sat down.

After two hours of studying, Robert moved closer to her and tried to kiss her. She rejected it.

Zach applauded her fidelity. It delighted him that she scorned Robert.

Minutes later, Robert left. Angel straightened up and went to bed.

While the professor lectured, Angel looked over at Robert. He looked away. She wondered why he didn't want to give her eye contact. Maybe, he was mad at her because she turned down his advances. After class, she'd see if she could get an answer from him.

The professor dismissed the class. Angel walked over to Robert. “Hey. Is there anything wrong?”
“What do you mean? You made it clear in your text that you don’t want to have anything to do with me.”

“What text? I didn’t send you a text.”

“Yes, you did. I can’t believe you deny it. Isn’t this your number?”

“Yes. I promise you I didn’t send that. Oh no, someone must’ve cloned my phone or something.”

“That’s deep. I was shocked when I received it and knew I was a little forward when I tried to kiss you, but we’d been cool since then.”

“I know. Anyway, forget about that awful text. I’m going to change my number. I’ll give you the new number when I get it. Are we cool now?”

“We’re cool. See you later.”

Angel walked away. Paranoia filled her body. Who would do such a thing? She didn’t have time to wonder about it and had to replace her phone as soon as possible.

When Angel got her new phone and number, she hesitated to keep all the people on her contact list. She knew Kate wouldn’t do something as crazy as cloning a phone.

Angel texted Kate. *Hey, this is Angel. This is my new number. Can I come over?*

Sure. Why did you change your number?

I’ll tell you when I get there.

Okay. See you.

Angel knocked on Kate’s door.

Kate opened the door. “Hey.”

They walked into the apartment.

“What’s going on?”

“I think someone cloned my other phone because Robert received a text I didn’t send.”

“That sounds creepy. Who’d do something like that?”

“I don’t know. Do you think someone’s watching me?”

“I hope not. By the way, how’s Zach?”

“He’s fine.”

“Are you sure he’s not watching you?”

“I never thought about it. However, I haven’t given him my new number.”

“How much do you know about him?”

“To be honest, not a lot. I got wrapped up in his kindness and his looks and didn’t think he was untrustworthy. Oh no, could he be watching me?”

“I don’t know. Maybe, we should involve my brother, Jake. You know he’s a detective.”

“I forgot about that.”

“I’ll give him a call. We’ll find out about Zach.”

“Okay. Thanks.”

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CHAPTER 4

The thought that Zach had monitored her disturbed Angel. She agreed to meet Jake at Kate's apartment.

"Hey, Jake. What did you find out?"

"It seems your Zach has a history of stalking women."

"I sure know how to pick them, don't I?"

Kate put her arm around her. "Don't beat yourself up about it. It could've happened to any of us."

"She's right. A lot of these people appear normal. They're like chameleons. The good thing is that we're on to him now. I think I better sweep your apartment for any cameras or listening devices."

"You sound 007 now."

"Funny. However, I need to make sure your apartment is clean. Have you given him your new phone number?"

"Not yet."

"We don't want to clue him in on your suspicion. I need you to give him the new number. If there's surveillance, I'll devise a trap for him."

"Okay. I'm a little scared."

"It's understandable. Just be careful. If need be, we may involve the authorities."

"Okay. When do you want to come over?"

"This afternoon."

"Great. The sooner, the better. I'll head home. Thanks to the both of you."

"You're welcome." Kate walked her to the door and hugged her.

Jake stood up. "Be safe. I'll be there soon."

Jake swept Angel's apartment and found the cameras. "I'm sure I got them all."

"Thank you. I'm trying to figure out when he had the opportunity to plant them. I've never invited him here."

"You must've felt something was off with him if you never invited him over. That was wise. Since you don't have a security system, he could've entered your apartment while you were away."

"True. I'll talk with management about getting one."

"Have you spoken with him?"

“No. I’m sure he’s tried to call my number and noticed it was disconnected. With the cameras gone, he can’t see what I’m doing. I think I’ll be better off just forgetting that he exists. Besides, I didn’t give him my new number.”

“Maybe. However, you need to be careful. Don’t hesitate to contact the police or me if he bothers you.”

“Okay. I’ll do that if anything occurs. Thanks again for your help.”

“You’re welcome. Take care.” Jake left.

Angel looked around her apartment. She felt exposed and wondered how long he’d been watching her.

When Zach didn’t hear from Angel and noticed he could no longer monitor her, he figured she found out.

He debated if he should still pursue her. However, he thought he might play it safe and stay away.

Angel was different from the other women he pursued. She had an innocence and sexiness about her that was addictive. He could still smell her sweet scent on his sheets.

Their romps in the hay made everlasting memories. When their bodies intertwined, it was like putting a key into a lock.

Zach powered on his laptop and viewed pictures of her. He’d captured every angle of her body for his viewing pleasure.

The more Zach viewed her, the more intense he felt. He had to have her. His craving must be satisfied.

Zach slipped on a gray hoodie and jeans. He headed for the door in search of his Angel.

Angel knew she shouldn’t miss Zach, but she did. She missed the way he caressed her body. His cooking was phenomenal. He filled in all the check marks on her list. Too bad her list didn’t include crazy.

After reading his background report, she wondered how he could be so obsessive. A man with his looks shouldn’t have the issues he had. He kept it away from her. Angel suspected nothing until that mysterious text. Zach was a good con artist.

Angel didn’t regret meeting him. He gave her six months of passion. She still felt love for him. Or, maybe lust for him. Her mind was confused.

Now she understood why some people do background checks on potential love interests. One would’ve saved her from the emotional pain she experienced.

She powered down her laptop and went to sleep.

Zach looked at Angel’s darkened apartment. He wanted to slide into her bed and make sweet love to her. However, he knew she probably had a security system installed and didn’t want to see him.

He sat in his car for two hours and contemplated on what he should do. Should he wait until morning and approach her in the daylight? Or, should he grab her at night and keep her against her will? Either one could result in a charge.

Zach questioned if Angel was worth losing his freedom. Did he want to find himself behind bars because he was obsessed with a sexy woman?

Could he force himself to erase her from his mind and hard drive? He stared into the darkness

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and felt drowsy. Zach started up his car and went home.

CHAPTER 5

Even though Angel hadn't seen Zach in weeks, she made sure she was aware of her surroundings. Sometimes, she felt paranoid. Other times, she felt he was off to his new obsession.

She wondered how she'd react if she ever saw him again. Would she scream? Or, would she embrace him and kiss him? He never physically harmed her. However, he raided her privacy.

These various thoughts consumed her mind. Angel couldn't erase him from her mind. She still wanted him. Was she insane? How could she desire him?

Her body craved him. What was she going to do? She couldn't imagine herself with anyone else.

Angel walked into the coffee shop and ordered her cappuccino. When she turned around and headed to the door, there he stood.

She froze. He grabbed her cup before it landed on the floor. Angel regained her composure, took her cup from him, and walked out the door.

Zach caught up with her. "Angel, please talk to me."

She ignored him and kept walking.

"I love you."

Angel stopped in her tracks and turned to him. "You love me? What is this love you have for me? Is it love or is it obsession? Or, did you want me as a possession? How can you love someone and not trust that person? Tell me."

"I was wrong. You know, I'm a photographer. The photographer in me loves to record moments."

"You recorded me without my knowledge. Not only was it wrong, but it was illegal. Who knows what else you would do?"

"Will you give me another chance?"

"You know, I often wondered what I'd say to you if I saw you again. Now, here you are in front of me. Even though I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent with you, I can't give in to my desire for you. You were deceptive from the start. Because of that, I've canceled you from my life. Please leave me alone before I file a stalking charge against you. I'm sure you're familiar with those."

Zach stared at her for ten seconds then walked away.

Angel didn't look back. She looked straight ahead, took a sip of her cappuccino, and walked down the street.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kay Hillery writes short stories under the name of Kay. Other short stories she's written are [*It's Time to Get Groceries*](#), [*Computer Blues*](#), and [*Mr. Trucker Man*](#).

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